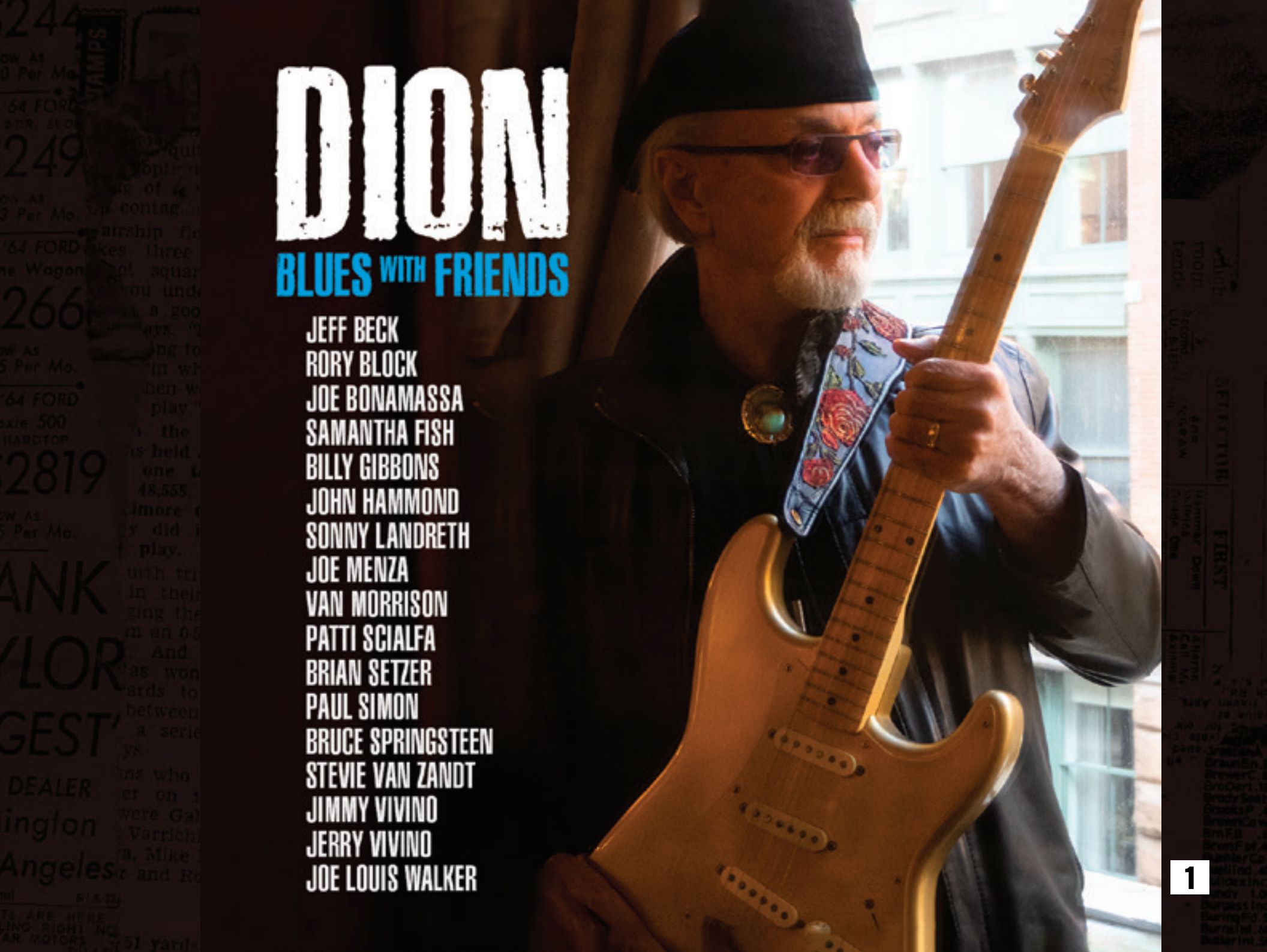
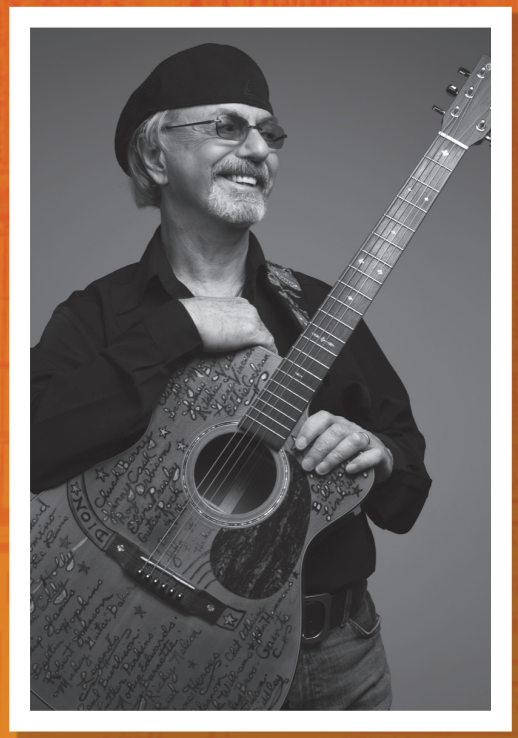

DION
BLUES WITH FRIENDS
JEFF BECK
RORY BLOCK
JOE BONAMASSA
SAMANTHA FISH
BILLY GIBBONS
JOHN HAMMOND
SONNY LANDRETH
JOE MENZA
VAN MORRISON
PATTI SCIALFA
BRIAN SETZER
PAUL SIMON
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
STEVIE VAN ZANDT
JIMMY VIVINO
JERRY VIVINO
JOE LOUIS WALKER

With a Vaudevillian Father and the Doo-wop street corners of the Bronx as teachers, Dion learned early on that the way to be heard and reach hearts was to sing in his own rhythmic voice. And when you have a voice as deep and wide as Dion's, that voice can take you all the way around the world and then all the way back home to the blues.

You have to be careful with the blues. They're strong with lust and you can overpay for them, but they quote the law. It's a shame more people don't follow that law. Guy Mitchell sang that he never felt more like singing the blues and we know what he meant. It is an honor for honor's sake. Dion knows how to sing and he knows just the right way to craft these songs, these blues songs.

He's got some friends here to help him out, some true luminaries. But in the end it's Dion by himself alone, and that masterful voice of his that will keep you returning to share these blues songs with him.



Bob Dylan

THE BLUES have been at the heart of my music since the early 1960s. I was covering Willie Dixon and Jimmy Reed in my early years at Columbia — much to the dismay of my corporate masters — and my own "The Wanderer" is a twelve-bar blues song. I've been around the block a few times since then, and I'm still playing the blues. In the years since my last album, I have been especially productive. I wanted to do an album of songs that were strong and memorable, and told stories that were worth telling, and I ended up writing a great batch of them.

DION & WAYNE HOOD

I was aware of Wayne Hood, the producer-musician who lives a stone's throw from my home, and from the first day, we hit it off like brothers on a mission. We understood the same vision and sound, and off we went. I ran the first number, "Blues Comin' On," for Joe Bonamassa, and he immediately said he wanted to play on it. For me, Joe took it to another level, a sublime performance. As we say, "he killed it!"

I think it's fair to say Joe was the catalyst for *BLUES WITH FRIENDS*. His contribution inspired me to invite others to play, and that, my friends, is how this album came about. I knew I wanted to round up the best guitarists and musicians alive, so I sent out invitations to my friends—and would you look at the names of who said yes!

MIKE AQUILINA & DION

PRODUCED BY WAYNE HOOD & DION
FOR DION PRODUCTIONS INC.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: ROY WEISMAN

DION: VOCALS & GUITAR

WAYNE HOOD: GUITARS, BASS, WURLITZER ELECTRIC PIANO, HAMMOND ORGAN & DRUMS

THANKS TO:
Much gratitude to Roy Weisman (The True Visionary Heart), Joe Bonamassa (for your faith in this labor of love), Rachael Iverson (Queen of Hearts) for all you do and Bobby Ekizian, rock on. . .

SPECIAL THANKS:
Dick Fox – for your wisdom, brilliant direction, generosity, care and love throughout the years. Mike Aquilina, I couldn't do it without you, your energy, talent, friendship, and thoughtfulness are off the charts. To Susan DiMucci, Emmora Irwin, John Sebastian and Joe Walsh. With great appreciation to Marc and Laurie Stollman, Bob Merlis, Roger Naber and Steve Bottari. I thank all my friends and featured artists for collaborating with me on this album, it truly was an honor! And thanks to Bob Dylan for the encouragement.

All Arrangements, Mixing, Digital Editing & Mastering by WAYNE HOOD
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Additional Photography: Dion by David Godlis and by Allison Michael Orenstein
Joe Menza by Jesse Menza | Brian Setzer by Russ Harrington
John Hammond by Jessica Chornsky | Van Morrison by Stray Kat
Billy Gibbons by Blain Clausen | Sonny Landreth by Greg Miles | Paul Simon by Mary Ellen Matthews | Rory Block by Sergio Kurhajec | Patti & Bruce by Danny Clinch

All Songs Written by **Dion DiMucci & Mike Aquilina** – Bronx Soul Music Inc. (ASCAP)
Except: "Kickin' Child" Written by Dion Dimucci & Buddy Lucas – Bronx Soul Music Inc. (ASCAP)
"Hymn To Him" Written by Dion & Bill Tuohy – Bronx Soul Music Inc. (ASCAP)/Skinny Zach Music (ASCAP)

Blues Comin' On
WITH JOE BONAMASSA

It's funny how a song evolves. For me it usually starts with a few words. In this case it was "If I didn't know better" I wanted to sing those words, so I wrote a song around them. Joe Bonamassa is a monster blues guitarist and took this song to a whole new level. I think it's fair to say he was the catalyst for the vision of this album. Rock on... You're the greatest!

Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
Joe Bonamassa: Slide Guitar
Recorded at Night Bird Studios – Los Angeles, CA
Engineer: Mike Gaydusek
Assistant Engineer: Evan Linhoss

Kickin' Child
WITH JOE MENZA

I was the first rock-and-roll artist signed to Columbia Records. I was sitting on a piano bench with Aretha Franklin singing this song one day when John Hammond Sr. walked in and told me I had a flair for the blues. Tom Wilson produced a version of "Kickin' Child" back then. But it wasn't where I wanted it to stay, so I re-recorded it here. The amazing guitarist Joe Menza knew exactly where I wanted it to go. Finally.

Written by Dion and Buddy Lucas
Joe Menza: Guitars
Recorded at M&I Recording – New York, NY
Engineers: Ira Yuspeh & Joe Menza

Uptown Number 7
WITH BRIAN SETZER

I wanted to write an old-fashioned Gospel number in the style of the Golden Gate Quartet. So many of those old songs worked a single simple metaphor all the way through. I wanted this one to be about moving forward in the spiritual life... having a goal... facing temptations along the way. All classic stuff. So I put it all on a train, because that's what New Yorkers do if they want to get anywhere: they take the train, and the train has a number and a direction. Brian Setzer drove the train with his hot-rod whammy-bar guitar. I love the way it turned out.

Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
Brian Setzer: Rhythm & Lead Guitar
Engineer: Jason Orris
Recorded at The Terrarium – Minneapolis, MN
Thank you for all you do... Scott Seine & Kalie Everhart

Can't Start Over Again
WITH JEFF BECK

My earliest influences were country blues, especially Hank Williams. I guess I still have that country feel inside. This is a song about love and loss and heartache, the classic themes. I believe it's a true blues song. When Jeff Beck said, "Yes, I'd love to play on it," I was over the moon. Check it out. What can I say, it's Jeff Beck.

Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
Jeff Beck: Lead Guitar
Appears courtesy of Rhino Records
Engineer: Ben Findlay
Recorded at Lucid Audio Ltd – United Kingdom
Thank you, Colin Newman

My Baby Loves To Boogie
WITH JOHN HAMMOND

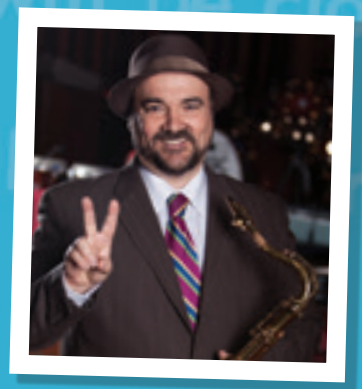
John Hammond and I go back to the '60s at the Gaslight coffee house in Greenwich Village. I've always admired John. He's a dear friend. I played him "My Baby Loves To Boogie," and he said he heard harp on it. Well, friends, now you could hear exactly what he was talking' about. It sounds like "Boogie Beyond."

Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
John Hammond: Harmonica
Wayne Hood and Dion: Lead Guitar
Recorded at M&I Recording – New York, NY Engineer: Ira Yuspah

I Got Nothin'
WITH VAN MORRISON & JOE LOUIS WALKER

You know when you sit down and you want to write a song, but nothing comes to mind? I was having one of those days. So I went with the feeling, and this is what I got. I got nothin', and nothing is enough! It's more than enough, actually, when you're singing it with Van Morrison. That's like riding the greatest wave in the world. Joe Louis Walker complemented us perfectly.

Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
Van Morrison: Vocals
Engineer: Ben McAuley
Recorded at Hollywood Studio, Co. Down, Northern Ireland
Joe Louis Walker: Lead Guitar
Engineer: Brandon Morrison
Recorded at The Building Records – Marlboro, NY



Stumbling Blues
WITH JIMMY & JERRY VIVINO

This is one of those melodies that came out of nowhere, and it feels like it's been drifting on the wind since the beginning of time. It's built on a classic blues progression. When I started singing it with Jimmy and Jerry, I knew I had something special. It came out extraordinary.

Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
Jimmy Vivino: Guitars
Jerry Vivino: Saxophone
Engineer: Skills Barre Duryea
Recorded at SkillSound – Burbank, CA

Bam Bang Boom
WITH BILLY GIBBONS

This is another song that started as phrases I wanted to sing: "Bam Bang Boom" and "I stepped into love." The lyric does a good job of describing what happened when I first met Susan. We were both teenagers. She was new to my very Italian neighborhood in the Bronx, and she was a redhead transplant from Vermont. Bam Bang Boom. Billy Gibbons was a joy to work with on this. He's a true renaissance man. I love the way he communicates with a guitar and in conversation. There's nobody like him.

Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
Billy Gibbons: Lead Guitar
Engineer: Mike Florentino
Recorded at Tennessee Recording Company

I Got The Cure
WITH SONNY LANDRETH

The blues aren't always about being down and out. When you aren't crying, you're bragging about what you can do. I think I can brag with the best of them. It's what I did in songs from "The Wanderer" in 1962 to "King of the New York Streets" in 1989 to "Gangster of Love" in 2015. Here I go again. (And, boy, did Sonny Landreth get it. He killed this one.)

Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
Sonny Landreth: Slide Guitar
Steve Argy: Bass
Engineer: Tony Daigle
Recorded at Electric Command – Lafayette, LA
Thank you, Grace Rogers

Song For Sam Cooke (Here In America) WITH PAUL SIMON

I wrote this tune back many years ago. At first I just had the melody and the refrain "Here in America." I tried for a while to find the themes, and a friend suggested I use an episode from my memoir about walking southern streets with Sam Cooke in 1962. That was it, exactly. I finished the song. But it felt too personal, so I put it aside. Then in 2019 I saw the movie "Green Book," and after that I couldn't shake the song. I sang it on camera for the great director David Niles. My friend Paul Simon wanted to record what he was hearing on the tune. It's a story we both share. I am totally blown away by the results. Thank you, Paul.

Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
Paul Simon: Vocals
Engineer: David Stoller Whitney
The Root Cellar Studio – Maui, HI
Studio- Niles Creative Group/
David Niles: Director
Recording Engineer: D. Cooper Getschal
(Also played Drums and Bass)
Carl Schmid: Violin
Tempo Key Studios – Jupiter, FL

What If I Told You
WITH SAMANTHA FISH

Same old story: suspicion.
The challenge is to make it new and fresh, and I think I did. If I put out the same amount of energy and emotion that Samantha Fish put into this song, I wouldn't be able to walk for three weeks.
I felt like she ripped my heart out without anesthesia —
and I liked it. EPIC!!

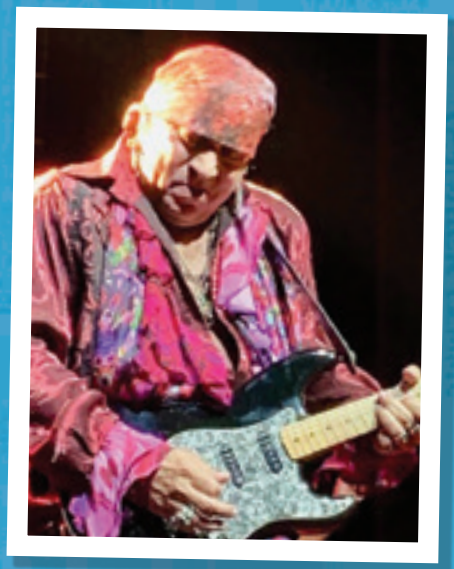
Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
Samantha Fish: Lead Guitar
Appears Courtesy of Rounder Records
Thanks to Rueben Williams
Mike Harvey: Engineer
Recorded at Nola Recording Studios, LLC – New Orleans, LA
Dion: Vocals
Engineer: Bob Guertin
Vocals Recorded at Sounds Great Productions – Boca Raton, FL

Told You Once In August
WITH JOHN HAMMOND & RORY BLOCK

One of my favorite guitars is a little Cordova travel model that I bought for practically nothing. One day I was fooling around on it, and I got this sound that reminded me of those old backwood Appalachian blues recordings. The drama that goes on out there is the same as the drama that goes on in the city. I tried to capture the slow anger of a man who gradually realizes he's been done wrong by his woman. John Hammond and Rory Block are amazing on this tune.

Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
John Hammond: Slide Guitar (Right)
M&I Recording, Engineer: Ira Yuspeh & Joe Menza
Rory Block: Slide Guitar (Left), Vocals, Bass & Guitar
Engineer: Rob Davis
Recorded at Kentucky Studios – Sandy Hook, KY

Way Down (I Won't Cry No More)
WITH STEVIE VAN ZANDT



This one didn't start with a phrase. It started with a rhythm. It got me and wouldn't let go. My dear friend Stevie Van Zandt just rocked it with his grit and nasty grunge guitar. He put the song just where it belongs: way down! We had a lot of fun in the studio, and then we went out to eat to celebrate. Love the Guy!

Written by Dion and Mike Aquilina
Stevie Van Zandt: Guitar
Engineer: Zach Allen
Engineer: Geoff Sanoff
2nd Engineer: Joel Feitzinger
Ben Newberry: Guitar Tech
Recorded at Renegade Studios

Hymn To Him
WITH PATTI SCIALFA & BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

I first recorded this song for my 1987 Gospel album *Velvet & Steel*. But songs are never finished; they're released. And sometimes they keep coming back to you. I kept hearing this with Patti's voice, so I asked her to help me remake the song. When she started singing and layering her vocals down, I got a big surprise. Bruce walked into the studio with his guitar and asked to play a solo. What a Christmas gift! They made it something sublime. Thank you, Patti and Bruce.

Written by Dion and Bill Tuohy
Patti Scialfa: Background Vocals / Bruce Springsteen: Lead Guitar
Produced by Patti Scialfa and Ron Aniello / Steve Argy: Bass Engineer: Rob Lebret
Recorded at Stone Hill Studio, NJ

"You have to be careful with the blues. They're strong with lust. Dion knows how to sing, and he knows just the right way to craft these blues songs." –Bob Dylan

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2. Kickin' Child WITH JOE MENZA
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PRODUCED BY WAYNE HOOD & DION

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